DECISIVE BATTLE AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

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13. ABSTRACT ***(Maximum 200 Words)***

With the quick military victories in Afghanistan and Iraq, one might be lulled into thinking that the Global War on Terror will be a quick military fight in accordance with Weigley's American way of war. This study cautions against such views and the desire to employ the concept of decisive battle in this protracted war on terror. This study looks at the historical and theoretical basis for decisive battle and assesses its impacts on the current doctrine of our military. With this foundation, the study then uses limited references to three case studies that share similar characteristics with the Global War on Terror to assess the impact of decisive battle. In light of theory and the hard lessons of selected application, this study examines the relevance of decisive battle to the Global War on Terror. Comparison of the Global War on Terror with historical case studies demonstrates that military power will likely continue to play a prominent role in conflict termination, but the military itself is not enough. The very nature of the Global War on Terror requires more than quick military victory to produce conflict termination.

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ABSTRACT

DECISIVE BATTLE AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR by MAJ John D. Cross, U.S. Army, 49 pages.

The stunning military victories of OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM have been a tribute to the prowess of the American armed forces. When coupled with the success of the First Gulf War, these victories have drawn renewed attention in military thinking to the promise inherent in the concept of decisive battle. At the same time, however, the likely protracted struggle associated with the contemporary Global War on Terror (GWOT) seemingly renders conventional notions of rapid military decision ephemeral.

This study considers the theoretical underpinnings of decisive battle and their practical implications for the GWOT. Over the course of description and analysis, decisive battle is defined as a single confrontation or campaign in which a military force compels its enemy to accept the intended political or social changes necessary for conflict termination. This study accepts as its theoretical point of departure the writings of classical theorists from Sun Tzu through Frederick the Great, Clausewitz, and Jomini. Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, as the nature of warfare continued to evolve, so also did the doctrine of decisive battle. The current doctrine of the United States military, while not fully embracing the concept, still finds some basis in it.

With limited reference to case studies, this study analyzes the impact of decisive battles on three wars in American military history that retained shared characteristics with the GWOT. In a number of ways, the American Indian Wars, World War II, and the Cold War were all similar to the Global War on Terror. In particular, these wars saw the American military engage multiple adversaries across vast distances in protracted struggles that traced their roots to contending ideologies.

In light of theory and the hard lessons of selected application, this study examines the relevance of decisive battle to the Global War on Terror. Comparison of the GWOT with historical case studies demonstrates that military power will likely continue to play a prominent role in conflict termination, but that the military in itself is not enough. The very nature of the Global War on Terror requires more than quick military victory to produce conflict termination.

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INTRODUCTION

On 20 September 2001, President George W. Bush addressed a Joint Session of the U.S. Congress and the American people concerning the terrorist attacks of 11 September that had destroyed the World Trade Center in New York City, struck the Pentagon, and crashed a fully loaded passenger plane in western Pennsylvania. During this speech, President Bush identified the perpetrators of these attacks as the extremist Islamic terrorist group – *al Qaeda*. He declared that the United States' "war on terror begins with *al Qaeda*, but does not end there."[1] The President demanded that the Taliban Regime of Afghanistan turn over the *al Qaeda* group and its leader, Osama Bin Laden. He also demanded that the Taliban let the United States come into Afghanistan for purposes of dismantling the terrorist training camps. President Bush indicated his resolve to lead the United States in this war on terror by drawing a line for the world to see: the other nations in the world were either with the United States or with the terrorists in this struggle.[2]

Preparing the people of the United States for the road ahead, President Bush stated that the war on terror would not unfold in the same vein as OPERATION DESERT STORM with a decisive operation and swift conclusion. The United States war on terror would be a long road not decided by any one battle or campaign.[3] This statement informed both the military establishment and the American people that the notion of a

[1] George W. Bush, "Address to Joint Session of Congress and the American People," available from http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html; Internet; accessed 20 September 2004.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

decisive battle would not apply in this war on terror. To win this war, the United States would need to apply all the elements of its national power: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic.[4]

In the initial stages of this Global War on Terror (GWOT), the United States flexed its economic muscle by freezing the bank accounts of organizations that provided aid to terrorist organizations. The United States deployed diplomatic teams to Pakistan, as well as Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, to build regional support and to obtain bases of operation for future operations in Afghanistan.[5]

With the conditions set by the diplomatic and economic elements of national power, the United States turned to its military element. In October 2001, United States military forces began operating in Afghanistan, seeking to achieve the objectives outlined by President Bush. These objectives included: the destruction of *al Qaeda*'s networks, training camps, resources, communications systems, and any government entity that supported *al Qaeda* (i.e. the Taliban Regime); and the reconstruction of Afghanistan to ensure that it would not become a safe haven or training ground for terrorists in the future.[6] Aligning with the Northern Alliance in its struggle against the Taliban Regime, the United States, using Special Forces teams and air power, forced the Taliban Regime to collapse and flee to the mountains along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The U.S. had its first victory in the Global War on Terror.

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[4] Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1, Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense Publishing, 2000), I-6

[5] Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan are countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. The United States sought their assistance because they bordered Afghanistan and would ensure stability in the Central Asia region. Additional information is available at http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm; Internet; accessed 22 September 2004.

[6] Sean M. Maloney, "Afghanistan: From Here to Eternity? – American Military Policy," *Parameters* (Spring 2004): 6-7.

The rapid collapse of the Taliban Regime resulted in an unanticipated effect – a vacuum of power in Afghanistan. The United States had intended to turn over stability operations to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) upon the fall of the Taliban Regime. Because the Taliban fled power sooner than expected, ISAF was not prepared to take control, and the United States did not have the required troops to conduct stability operations. The resurgence of regional warlords and tribal leaders quickly filled this power vacuum.[7] Despite the arrival of ISAF in early 2002, the warlords maintained control over much of the country, making stabilization very difficult.[8] Although the United States had set the conditions prior to military action, it could not transform the military victory and defeat of the Taliban immediately into a thoroughgoing strategic success that would assure a democratic Afghanistan no longer harboring terrorists. President Bush's comments about a long road in the war on terror began to prove true.

As United States and coalition forces continued to hunt the members of *al Qaeda* and the Taliban while stabilizing Afghanistan, the US directed its attention to Iraq.[9] A one-time ally, Saddam Hussein, the President of Iraq, had been a thorn in the side of the US since he had invaded Kuwait in August 1990. After suffering defeat at the hands of coalition forces led by the US in liberating Kuwait in early 1991, Hussein defied the United Nations (UN) by denying full access to UN weapons inspectors. The UN Security Council implemented these inspections as part of Resolution 687 (SCR 687), the formal cease-fire agreement, in April 1991. SCR 687 stipulated that Hussein would neither

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[7] Carl Conetta, *Strange Victory: A Critical Appraisal of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Afghanistan War* (Cambridge, MA: Commonwealth Institute Project on Defense Alternatives, 2002), 18.

[8] Maloney, 8.

[9] Gregory Fontenot, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 29.

possess nor produce chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including missiles with a range of greater than 150 kilometers to deliver these weapons.[10]

In late 2002, President Bush began to demand that Hussein prove that he did not possess any WMD. Using this issue as a pretext for invasion, the US sought UN approval for invading Iraq because of non-compliance with SCR 687. Despite evidence presented by the US and Great Britain, the Security Council did not approve the invasion. The US and Great Britain decided to enforce SCR 687 on their own and invaded Iraq in March 2003. Within three weeks, Baghdad fell and Saddam Hussein had gone into hiding. The US and Great Britain had completed one of the most decisive military campaigns in history. In a matter of weeks, two US Army divisions, one US Marine Corps division, and one British armored division, supported by the United States Air Force, Navy, and Special Operations Forces, maneuvered over vast expanses, including the 350-miles to Baghdad that caused the collapse of Hussein's regime.[11]

Despite an apparently decisive campaign, the United States soon found itself struggling against a variety of insurgent forces.[12] Their various groups had different motives, but the same goal: the departure of the United States from Iraq. Just as in Afghanistan, the absence of an immediate interim government had created an unstable

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[10] Alfred B. Prados, *Iraq: Post-War Challenges and U.S. Responses, 1991-1998* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 1999), 6; available from http://www.iraqwatch.org/government/US/CRS%20Docs/postwar.pdf; Internet; accessed 14 October 2004. For the full text of SCR 687, see www.unog.ch/uncc/resolutio/res0687.pdf.

[11] Duncan Hunter, *Year in Review: Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Washington, DC: House Armed Services Committee, 2003), 9; available from http://armedservices.house.gov/issues/WarOnTerror/yearinreview.pdf; Internet; accessed 18 October 2004.

[12] Doug Sample, "'Different Elements' Behind Attacks in Iraq, Secretary Says," 20 August 2003; available from http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Aug2003/n08202003_200308203.html; Internet; accessed 19 October 2004.

situation. Again, the United States had achieved a quick, decisive, military victory, but struggled with transforming that victory into a stable, democratic Iraq, thereby marking a successful conclusion of the war.

The current operations in Iraq, coupled with on-going operations in Afghanistan, should give commanders and planners reason to pause and consider what is truly decisive in an operation. Is the decisive element of battle or major combat operations the quick end to hostilities through firepower and maneuver? Or, alternatively, is the decisive element the conduct of post-combat operations, shaped by major combat operations, to establish stable democratic countries that are favorable to United States interests? In turn, these questions give rise to the major question that the current study endeavors to answer: Is the concept of decisive battle compatible with the Global War on Terror? As evidenced in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM, quick military victories in a decisive battle or campaign do not necessarily imply overall success in the war on terror. To be effective in the war on terror, the United States, and its Army in particular, must consider what is truly decisive to a campaign, train their forces to meet the demands of this decisive effort, and not fall prey to the idea of a decisive battle that will bring the enemy to capitulation. By relying mostly on its military power, the United States may continue to miss the point of what is decisive. There is the danger that the United States may sacrifice its longer-term strategic goals for the sake of the military victory.

Research directed at answering the question on decisive battle will survey theoretical viewpoints and current viewpoints of the United States Armed Forces concerning decisive battle. These viewpoints will assist in defining the concept of

decisive battle and in determining the effectiveness of decisive battle in three historical case studies. The latter involve wars of a prolonged nature with U.S. participation, and they demonstrate how the search for a decisive battle did or did not contribute to the outcome. Subsequently, the study shifts focus to the nature of the war on terror to determine the relevance of decisive battle to this kind of conflict.

This approach recognizes that reliance upon theory and selected historical case studies can condition research outcomes. However, the merits of the method appear to outweigh its shortcomings. Both theory and history offer significant promise as instruments capable of offering important perspective and precedent for viable solutions in the current conflict. Yet, theory and history cannot provide cookie-cutter solutions to the problem the United States now faces. At their best, these disciplines can nonetheless suggest pertinent parallels and solution sets that more surely point the way to a better long-term strategic outcomes as opposed to short-term and often ephemeral military victories.

WHAT IS DECISIVE BATTLE?

The Nature of the Question

To understand decisive battle's theoretical basis and its influence on contemporary military views initially demands a definition for the term. History has recorded many battles and, while perhaps a majority of these battles resulted in decision, few have been truly decisive. In his classic (1851) book, *Fifteen Decisive Battles*, Sir Edward S. Creasy reviewed armed confrontations ranging from the Battle of Marathon to the Battle of Waterloo. To determine what battles to include in his survey, Creasy applied two

criteria: 1) the outcome affected the interests of many states, not just those involved in the battle; and 2) the outcome of the battle was not limited to just the current age, but affected generations to come.[13]

A century and a half later, Paul Davis considered a larger number of battles in his book, *100 Decisive Battles: From Ancient Times to the Present.* Given the passage of time since Creasy's publication, Davis had more battles to consider. Davis employed three different criteria for incorporating battles into his work. His requirements were: 1) the outcome of the battle brought about a significant social or political change; 2) if the battle had produced a reverse outcome, significant social or political change would have occurred; and 3) the battle introduced a new element of warfare, causing a change of doctrine.[14]

In light of these two perspectives, a decisive battle may possibly be best described as one in which a significant social or political change affecting several nations emerges as an outcome. Such a decisive battle could be either the final, climatic battle of a war or an intermediate battle that, while not crushing the enemy's will or resources, served to foreshadow the outcome of a war. A legitimate inference may be that focus on decisive battle stems from a combatant's desire to quickly bend the enemy to his will and get back to everyday life.

Theoretical Views

The theoretical underpinnings of decisive battle contribute to an understanding of contemporary views of this concept. Such military theorists as Sun Tzu, Frederick the

[13] Sir Edward S. Creasy, *Fifteen Decisive Battles* (New York: A.L. Burt Publishing, 1851), 7.
[14] Paul K. Davis, *100 Decisive Battles: From Ancient Times to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Press, 1999), xi.

Great, Carl von Clausewitz, and Antoine Henri Jomini offer much in terms of the nature of war; how to fight battles and wage wars; and how to induce decision in war. While these four theorists do not have all the answers, their perspectives have contributed substantially to current views within the U.S. Armed Forces.

Sun Tzu, a Chinese military planner and theorist of the 5th Century B.C., sought to conclude wars quickly by attacking the enemy's strategy, his alliances, or his army.[15] Regardless of the action selected, Sun Tzu identified victory as the main object of war. The general should not delay operations because delay lowers the morale of the soldiers and dulls their weapons and their training. Additionally, protracted campaigns drained the resources of the state, which would never benefit from an extended campaign.[16] These assertions could lead one to assume that Sun Tzu sought to fight a war decided by a single battle or campaign. The agrarian nature of Chinese society forced rulers to fight during set times of the year, usually during the summer. Rulers used decisive battle to conclude disputes quickly, thereby returning soldiers to their everyday jobs as farmers and thus supporting the kingdom with food.

Some two millennia later, a Prussian king burst upon the central European scene. Frederick the Great came to the throne in 1740 and, in that same year, invaded the Austrian province of Silesia to make it his own.[17] With Silesia under Prussian control, Frederick spent the remaining years of his reign defending his gain against the forces of Russian, Austria, and France. In defending Prussia, Frederick the Great maximized possession of interior lines to conduct a strategic defensive while capitalizing on

[15] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 77.
[16] Ibid, 73.
[17] Jay Luvaas, *Frederick the Great on the Art of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 3.

tactically offensive maneuver. Frederick recognized that the search for a decisive battle against his coalition enemy would more than likely result in the loss of his state and his throne. Therefore, he resorted to a strategy of maneuver and attrition. Frederick would fight his enemies until they tired of battle and either returned home or settled into winter quarters.[18]

Despite the emphasis on an attrition strategy, Frederick often commented on the benefits of decisive battle. In 1747, he told his generals, "War is decided only by battles, and it is not finished except by them. Thus they have to be fought, but it should be done opportunely and with all the advantages on your side."[19] Later, in discussing the nature of battle, Frederick stated, "Battles decide the fate of a nation. In war it is absolutely necessary to come to decisive actions either to get out of the distress of war or to place the enemy in that position, or even to settle a quarrel which otherwise perhaps would never be finished."[20] Frederick understood the importance of decisive battle. However, with Prussia's limited manpower and resources, he knew he could not pursue the decisive battle without great cost to himself and his country.

Within twenty years of Frederick's last battle, the history of warfare witnessed another evolutionary turn in Europe. The French Revolution brought forth the *Grande Armee*, an army of the people, not the standing armies of the ruling class. With this and other instruments at his disposal, Napoleon Bonaparte ascended to power and fought his wars with much of Europe. Napoleon eventually developed four principles for planning and conducting his strategic campaigns. First, he ensured that every campaign had one

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[18] Ibid., 23.

[19] Thomas R. Phillips, ed., *Roots of Strategy, Book 1* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1985), 391.

[20] Luvaas, 139.

clearly stated objective. Second, he believed that the enemy's main force should be that objective. Third, the army should maneuver to place itself in a position of advantage on its enemy's flank or rear. Finally, the army should target the enemy's lines of communication, while simultaneously ensuring the protection of its own lines of communication.[21] In accordance with these principles, a classic Napoleonic campaign generally led to a decisive battle that not only determined a winner and loser of the battle, but also a winner and loser of the war.[22] In the years 1805-1807, Napoleon demonstrated the effectiveness of decisive battle against the Austrians (Austerlitz – 1805), the Prussians (Jena-Auerstadt – 1806), and the Russians (Friedland – 1807).[23] Napoleon's mastery of decisive battle enabled him to bend the enemy to his will, end the war, and obtain the political goals he had set out to achieve. Meanwhile, two notable military theorists, Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine Henri Jomini, traced their roots to the Napoleonic period. Each set out to explain Napoleon's unique mastery of the military art.

During the Napoleonic Wars, Carl von Clausewitz served as a staff officer in the Prussian and Russian armies, rising to the rank of general and becoming the Inspector General of the Silesian artillery.[24] Many defeats at the hands of Napoleon greatly influenced Clausewitz's approach to war. Fighting as an adversary of Napoleon for much

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[21] James J. Schneider, *Theoretical Paper #3: The Theory of Operational Art.* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1988), 8.

[22] Ibid, 9.

[23] John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003), 180-181. Each of these battles resulted not only in the tactical defeats of Napoleon's adversaries, but also their war ending capitulation. However, the terms of peace did not last. All three nations returned to fight against Napoleon in later coalitions. This fact may have led Clausewitz to pen, "the ultimate outcome of a war is not always to be regarded as final."

[24] Peter Paret, "The Genesis of *On War*," an introduction to *On War*, by Carl von Clausewitz (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 5-25.

of the time, Clausewitz did not necessarily seek a ready-made solution for victory in war. Rather, he delved into the nature of war and its social impact. He defined war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."[25]

Clausewitz saw combat as "the only effective force in war." Combat enabled one nation to destroy the forces of another nation to achieve the desired ends. The threat of combat could work just as well as actual combat because of the possibility of losing.[26] Clausewitz provides five conditions for prosecuting a war. First, the destruction of the enemy is the overriding principle of war and the primary way to achieve one's goals (similar to Napoleon's second principle). Second, fighting is the only means to achieve the destruction of the enemy. Third, only major engagements lead to major successes. Fourth, the greatest successes result from great battles. Finally, in a great battle, the general will control operations in person, trusting only in himself.[27] Focus only on these five conditions naturally leads to the idea of a great battle that might well call for leaders to destroy the enemy force. A great or decisive battle would achieve the state's goals and destroy the adversary's military force, thus forcing him to end the conflict.

Antoine Henri Jomini was a second prominent theorist who made similar contributions to the military art in the wake of the Napoleonic wars. Jomini, a Swiss-born staff officer in Napoleon's *Grande Armee*, observed the conduct of warfare from the highly personal perspective of Napoleon and his marshals.[28] As a part of the winning team, Jomini sought to provide a system of principles that, if followed, would enable an

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[25] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.
[26] Ibid., 97.
[27] Ibid., 258.
[28] Charles Messenger, introduction to *The Art of War* by Antoine H. Jomini (London: Greenhill Books, 1996), v-vi.

army to defeat its adversary. These principles subsequently became the focus of many military establishments and influenced several generations of officers, including many who fought in the American Civil War.

Jomini's fundamental principle of war included four maxims. First, by strategic movements, one should throw the mass of the army successively upon the decisive points of the theater and upon the enemy's lines of communication as much as possible while not compromising one's own. Second, one should maneuver to engage portions of the enemy with the bulk of one's forces. Third, on the battlefield, one should throw the mass of his forces upon the decisive point or that portion of the enemy line to be overthrown first. Finally, one should not only throw his masses helter-skelter on the decisive points, but must arrange the sequence so that the forces engage at the proper time and with energy. Jomini recognized that other military theorists might criticize his fundamental principle for its simplicity. However, the difficulty of the principle lay in its application: success depended upon the general's ability to determine the decisive points of the theater or battlefield. [29]

Jomini extols the virtues of decisive battle as conducted by Napoleon stating, "he [Napoleon] was convinced that the best means of accomplishing great results was to dislodge and destroy the hostile army, since states and provinces fall of themselves when there is no organized force to protect them."[30] Jomini viewed Napoleon's abilities to take advantage of terrain, identify enemy weakness, quickly maneuver his forces, strike the decisive points with the mass of his forces, and pursue the enemy as keys to success in decisive battle. Jomini did note that the formula did not always produce a decisive battle.

[29] Antoine Henri Jomini, *The Art of War* (London: Greenhill Books, 1996), 70-71.
[30] Ibid., 89.

Although the formula proved very effective in the constrained terrain of Central and Western Europe, it proved disastrous when Napoleon invaded Russia, a land of wide-open spaces. [31]

The Inheritors' Views

Throughout the remainder of the 19th and into the 20th centuries, the legacy of Napoleon as seen through the eyes of Clausewitz and Jomini encouraged the armies of Europe to search for Napoleonic-style decisive battles. Clausewitz's influence through his disciples in the evolving Prussian General Staff system contributed directly to Prussian successes in 1866 and 1870-71. Buoyed by these victories, the Prussian – soon to be German – Army maintained the quest for decisive battle as it entered World War I. When the 1914 offensive into France stalled, the same quest led the German Army to reject ceding ground, a major factor leading to the indecisive trench warfare of World War I.[32]

Several other factors contributed to the demise of decisive battle as conducted by Napoleon and expounded by Clausewitz and Jomini. The first was that the growing size of modern armies did not lend itself to the concept of decisive battle. The modern army of the late 19th and 20th centuries consisted of many field armies, each with several hundred thousand soldiers. These field armies might occupy positions throughout the depth of a theater of operations. A single battle could not destroy a nation's military, thus leading that nation to seek terms of surrender. A second factor was the inability of the victorious army to pursue its adversary. With the increase in the size of armies came a

[31] Ibid., 89.
[32] Luvaas, 28.

significant increase in the logistics that supported them. A defeated army could fall back upon its own lines of communication, while the pursuer extended his own lines of communication.[33] A third factor was the impact of advances in technology. The increased range and rates of fire for rifles and artillery expanded the area of battle not only in breadth, but also in depth. This increased area of battle, coupled with the larger, modern armies, made it next to impossible to "compress the enemy into one dense battlefield."[34] These factors, while not absolute, contributed greatly to at least the temporary the demise of *the* decisive battle.

In the aftermath of World War I, two continental-style variations on traditional approaches to land warfare emerged. The first, developed by the Germans, emphasized rapidity and maneuver to produce decisive battle. However, the Germans recognized that more than a single battle was necessary to produce peace, given the size of modern armies and the capabilities of modern weapons. Instead, the Germans focused on a short campaign that would knock their adversary out of a war. This approach, known to the world as *Blitzkrieg,* enjoyed success during the invasions of Poland, Norway, the low-countries, and France. The second approach, developed by the Russians, and based on their experience in World War I and in their own civil war, consisted of conducting several successive operations throughout the depth of a theater to drive the enemy into submission. While serving as the head of the Military Academy in Moscow, M.N. Tukhachevsky articulated this new style of warfare:

> Since it is impossible, with the extended fronts of modern times, to destroy the enemy's army at a single blow, we are obliged to try to do this

[33] Schneider, 11-12.

[34] James J. Schneider, introduction to *The Nature of the Operations of Modern Armies* by A. A. Triandafillov (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishing, 1994), xxix.

> gradually by operations which will be more costly to the enemy than to ourselves. The more rapidly we pursue him, the less time we give him to organize his retreat after the battle, and the more we hasten the disintegration of his armed forces and make it impossible, or at all events difficult, for him to enter upon another general engagement. In short, a series of destructive operations conducted on logical principles and linked together by an uninterrupted pursuit may take the place of the decisive battle that was the form of engagement in the armies of the past, which fought on shorter fronts.[35]

Tukhachevsky was only one of a number of thinkers in the Soviet Union who considered the larger implications of simultaneous operations.[36] During 1943-45, this new approach to war with simultaneous and successive operations as the decisive factor enabled the Soviet Union to overcome the initial losses of 1941-42 and to drive the *Wehrmacht* back into the heart of Germany.[37]

After a period of conceptual and doctrinal neglect, this operational framework reemerged in the 1980s and contributed to the basis for the United States Army's doctrine of AirLand Battle. AirLand Battle stated:

> The object of all operations is to impose our will upon the enemy – to achieve our purposes. To do this, we must throw the enemy off balance with a powerful blow from an unexpected direction, follow-up rapidly to prevent his recovery, and continue operations aggressively to achieve the higher commander's goals.[38]

To achieve this goal, the Army set forth the tenets of AirLand Battle: agility, initiative, depth, and synchronization. Using these tenets, the Army sought to conduct simultaneous operations throughout the depth of the battlefield with agile forces that

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[35] Ibid., p.xxx.

[36] Bruce W. Menning, "Operational Art's Origins," *Military Review* (September-October 1997), 36.

[37] Ibid., 40.

[38] United States Army, *FM 100-5, Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1986), 14.

could face a myriad of situations while cooperating and coordinating with the other services.[39] In early 1991, the Army proved the effectiveness of this doctrine during OPERATION DESERT STORM. The doctrine of AirLand Battle continued to evolve, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 1993, the Army added versatility as a tenet, and AirLand Battle became known as Army Operations. Since that time, the Army has undergone a reduction in force and broadened its focus. Meanwhile, the 1990s witnessed the Army's repeated deployments for humanitarian and peacekeeping missions. Although these deployments and types of missions have increased for the Army, its role remains "to fight and win our nation's wars."[40]

Contemporary Views

The foregoing discussion has focused on the theoretical underpinnings of decisive battle in the doctrine of the United States Armed Forces. Consideration of this concept in contemporary context requires reference to the doctrinal views of the United States Army and United States Marine Corps, since these two services are habitually involved in ground battles and campaigns that highlight the significance of decisive battle.[41]

In June 2001, the Army replaced *FM 100-5, Army Operations* with *FM 3-0, Operations*. While neither publication mentions decisive battle, its legacy lives on in the form of *FM 3-0*'s *decisive operations*. Prior to *FM 3-0,* Army doctrine incorporated several definitions for the term "decisive operations." The 1993 edition of *FM 100-5*

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[39] Ibid., 15-19.

[40] United States Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2001), 1-2.

[41] While the United States Marine Corps possesses many of the attributes of a separate service, it is a component of the Department of the Navy.

provided multiple definitions for decisive operations based upon the various levels of war. At the strategic level of war, the Army's decisive operation was to produce "forces of the highest quality, able to deploy rapidly, to fight, to sustain themselves, and to win quickly with minimum casualties."[42] At the tactical level of war, decisive operations were "deep operations to set the conditions for decisive future operations."[43]

With the publication of *FM 3-0*, decisive operations became a clearly defined term for the first time:

> Decisive operations are those that directly accomplish the task assigned by the higher headquarters. Decisive operations conclusively determine the outcome of major operations, battles, and engagements. There is only one decisive operation for any major operation, battle, or engagement for any echelon. The decisive operation may include multiple actions conducted simultaneously throughout the area of operation. Commanders weight the decisive operation by economizing on combat power allocated to shaping operations.[44]

This definition combined the concepts of decisive battle with successive and simultaneous operations. In conducting the decisive operation, the commander must ordinarily use the larger weight of his force, much like Jomini's recommendation for massing on the decisive point and Clausewitz's conditions for executing war. However, the doctrinal definition of decisive operations does not lead one to believe that the successful completion of the operation will conclude the war or campaign in the manner of a decisive battle. While not stated outright, this definition hints that the successful conclusion will set the conditions for follow-on operations and campaigns. The

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[42] United States Army, *FM 100-5, Army Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1993), 1-5. Charles Lawhorn examines the differences in definitions of decisive operations in his SAMS monograph, "Defining Decisive: Toward Developing a Doctrinal Understanding of Decisive Operations and Decisive Points for the 21st Century Force" (AMSP Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2001).

[43] Ibid., 6-14.

[44] U.S. Army, *FM 3-0, Operations,* 4-23.

implication remains similar to the Soviet model of successive operations, in which the planning for and the conduct of future operations continue until the enemy surrenders from exhaustion or dislocation. A planner must escape the mindset of decisive battle to plan for more than a single operation. An officer who ignores this proposition displays pure hubris.

The United States Marine Corps does not use the term decisive battle or decisive operation. This assertion is not to say that the Marine Corps does not seek to attain decisions by its actions. With its smaller, more mobile force, the Marine Corps uses maneuver warfare as its means to engage the enemy and achieve a decision. The Marine Corps accentuated the shift in modern warfare away from the quantitative (mass and volume) toward the qualitative (speed, stealth, precision, and sustainability).[45] With this shift in warfare, it should come as no surprise that the Marine Corps espouses maneuver warfare.

In maneuver warfare, a force uses rapid maneuver to seize terrain or positions that place the enemy in a position of disadvantage, thus forcing the enemy to surrender in the face of overwhelming odds and potential destruction. Napoleon's maneuvers against the Austrians during the Battle of Ulm are a classic example of maneuver warfare. The Marine Corps has maintained this tradition by defining maneuver warfare as "a philosophy for generating the greatest decisive effect against the enemy at the least possible cost to ourselves – a philosophy for 'fighting smart.'"[46]

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[45] United States Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare* (Washington DC: USMC Publishing, 2001), 4.

[46] United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, Warfighting* (Washington DC: USMC Publishing, 2001), 96.

In conducting maneuver warfare, the Marine Corps emphasizes the main effort – that force that has the responsibility of accomplishing the mission – "the focal point upon which converges the combat power of the force." The main effort represents the "primary bid for victory." The commander must direct the main effort where it will have the greatest effect on the enemy and the best opportunity for success. [47]

The Marine Corps stresses the ability to achieve decision through combat in *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-3, Tactics*. In historical perspective, success in past battles and wars went to those forces with leaders who directed their efforts toward a decisive end.[48] A leader must identify the desired decision before committing forces to the battle and formulate his tactical plan to achieve this decision. For a battle or campaign to be decisive, it must lead to a result beyond itself; it must lead directly to ultimate success in the war.[49]

The Marine Corps, much like the Army, relies on Clausewitz's conditions for executing war and Jomini's fundamental principle of war as the foundations for its doctrine. The Marine Corps weights the main effort and sends it where it will achieve the decision sought for in the mission. However, unlike the Army, the Marine Corps states clearly that the decision achieved by the mission should set the conditions for follow-on operations that will ultimately end the war. The combination of the recognition that a single engagement will not end the war with the intent of using successful operations to set the conditions for future operations falls unconsciously in line with the Soviet concept of successive operations.

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[47] Ibid., 90-91.

[48] United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-3, Tactics* (Washington DC: USMC Publishing, 2001), ii.

[49] Ibid., 24.

While the Army and Marine Corps use different terminology in their doctrine, both base their doctrine directly or indirectly on the theorists that have preceded them. Combining Clausewitz's conditions of war and Jomini's fundamental principle of war with the rapid maneuver of *Blitzkrieg* and successive and simultaneous operations, as developed by the Soviets, the Army and Marine Corps have established a framework for conducting operations in the 21st century. The mountains of Afghanistan and the sands of Iraq have seemingly validated contemporary doctrine. Still, as operations continue in both countries, the United States finds that it cannot rest on the laurels of purely military victory in decisive battles, but must seek ways to transform victory into lasting peace.

This chapter began with an initial definition of decisive battle as a battle "in which a significant social or political change affecting several nations comes about as an outcome." Subsequent discussion of historical, theoretical, and contemporary perspective on decisive battle revealed that the initial definition fails to suffice. Since large armies, expansive battlefields, and advances in technology (the conditions that led to the demise of decisive battle) still exist, any new definition must account for these considerations. Returning to Clausewitz's definition of war, one might now define decisive battle as a single battle or campaign by a force that compels the enemy to accept the political or social changes desired and terminate the conflict.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF DECISIVE BATTLE

Armed with an understanding of what decisive battle is, its theoretical underpinnings, and its contemporary military application, this study now turns to consider the use of decisive battle in three different wars. The selected historical case

studies share some similarities with the War on Terror. These similarities include waging a war against multiple enemies, fighting prolonged campaigns in several theaters, and contending with ideological differences between the belligerents. The historical analyses include the American Indian Wars, World War II, and the Cold War.

American Indian Wars

From 1492 when Columbus landed on the island of Hispaniola to Wounded Knee in 1890, conflict was a way of life between the Native Americans and European settlers. For the purpose of brevity, this study focuses on the American Indian Wars between 1865 and 1890. Prior to the Civil War of 1861-1865, the United States had settled Oregon; annexed territory from Mexico following the Mexican-American War that included Texas, California, and parts of Arizona and New Mexico; and obtained the remaining land of Arizona and New Mexico from Mexico in the Gadsden Purchase. Surrounded by white settlements, the Indians' ability to move and hunt freely became limited, threatening their existence. Following the Civil War, the United States once again turned its eyes toward the land inhabited by the Indians as it strove to connect the states in the east with those in the west. [50]

The American Indian Wars covered great expanses of territory and involved many different tribes of Indians. From Texas and Arizona in the south to Montana and Idaho in the north, the United States Army pursued those Indians who either attacked settlers or would not settle on reservations. The ideological struggle pitted the Indians' desire to maintain their traditional lifestyle against the growing sentiment of "Manifest Destiny" by the United States. The initial campaigns by the U.S. Army on the Plains resulted in

[50] Joseph Alessi, interview by author, 13 November 2004, Fort Leavenworth, KS. Major Alessi holds a PhD in History with a focus on the American Indian Wars.

several failures that not only demoralized the soldiers, but also emboldened the Indians and their resistance.[51] In 1868, General Philip H. Sheridan became the commander of the Division of the Missouri, a subordinate element of the Military Division of the Missouri, commanded by General William T. Sherman.[52] Having served together in the Civil War, the two men determined to wage a "total war" against the Indians to reduce them to poverty, with no other option than to move to reservations.[53] Despite intermittent overtures of peace by the U.S. government, this total war policy remained the strategic foundation of the Army's campaign against the Indians.

The Army campaigns using the total war concept provided little rest for both the Indians and the soldiers involved. Sheridan's winter campaign of 1868 resulted in the Battles of Washita and Soldier Spring. These battles forced many Cheyenne Indians to move to the reservation. In the spring of 1869, elements of the 5th Cavalry decisively defeated the Cheyenne Indians at Summit Springs, Colorado. This defeat crushed the Dog Soldiers, a militant society of the Cheyenne, and forced the remaining Cheyenne to move to the reservation.[54]

Meanwhile, from 1866 to 1868, General George Crook, another veteran of the Civil War, applied the total war concept while fighting the Snake Indians in southeastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho. General Crook employed a series of pursuits and guerilla actions that exhausted the Snake Indians. Forty-nine engagements over two

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[51] Alan Axelrod, *Chronicle of the Indian Wars* (New York: Prentice Hall General Reference, 1993), 200-205.

[52] Jerry Keenan, "Sheridan, Gen. Philip Henry," *Encyclopedia of the American Indian Wars: 1492-1890* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 209-210.

[53] Axelrod, 206.

[54] Ibid., 208-210.

years forced them to seek terms and move to a reservation.[55] In the spring of 1874, General Sheridan again applied the total war approach in the Red River War. This flare up began when elements of the Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne tribes left their reservations and attacked settlers, ranchers, and a group of Texas Rangers in northern Texas. Mounting a punitive expedition, Sheridan's forces converged on the Texas Panhandle from New Mexico, Texas, Indian Territory, and Kansas. Army forces sought to defeat the Indians and pursue them to exhaustion. Aided by a harsh winter, the Army forced the Indians back to their reservations and sent the leaders into captivity.[56]

In 1876-77, the Army fought the Sioux Indians over the Black Hills of South Dakota.[57] The first two battles of the Great Sioux War proved indecisive. In both cases, Army forces retired from the field without a decision.[58] The Army's inability to defeat the Sioux emboldened the Sioux to continue resistance. The third engagement was a complete rout of the Army forces by the Indians in the Battle of Little Big Horn. On the June 25, 1876, Lieutenant Colonel George Custer led the 7th Cavalry into a decisive engagement, with little reconnaissance, which resulted in the piecemeal defeat of the 7th Cavalry and the annihilation of 230 soldiers under Custer's immediate command. Appalled by this defeat, Congress increased the size of the Army and supported General Sheridan as he continued his Sioux offensive. In 1877, Sheridan's forces defeated the Sioux at Wolf Mountain and Lame Deer Creek to force them onto the reservation.[59]

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[55] Ibid., 214.
[56] Ibid., 220.
[57] Ibid., 221.
[58] Keenan, "Crook, Gen. George," 59.
[59] Alessi.

In the southwestern United States, the Army contended with the discontent of the Apache Indians. Poor conditions on the reservations and Apache indifference to the United States-Mexico boundary established by the Gadsden Purchase resulted in Apache raids on both sides of the border.[60] Despite the efforts of the Apache leader Cochise to stem the raiding parties' activities, the bands continued looting as a way of life. In 1877, Geronimo emerged as a leader of the Apaches. The Apaches continued to conduct raids while the Army pursued them. In 1882, General Crook undertook a methodical approach to solving the problems caused by the Apaches. He ensured a strong military presence on the reservations, established Apache auxiliary units, employed Apache scouts, and, based on his previous experience, used mobility and dogged pursuit to force the Apache raiding parties to return to the reservations. On March 25, 1886, Geronimo led the Apaches to accept surrender terms and return to the reservation.[61]

With the experience of the American Civil War to guide them, the commanders of the U.S. Army waged a total war on those Indians who did not comply with the U.S. Government. This total war took the form of tireless pursuits of whole villages and tribes, not just individual warriors, throughout the entire year. The Army's pursuits did not allow the Indians hunt and gather rations in preparation for winter. By denying the Indians winter quarters, the Army forced them onto reservations where they would be able to survive courtesy of the government. The possibility of a single decisive battle to end the American Indian Wars was out of the question. The large expanse of land covered by the Indians required territorial divisions under the command of the Military Division of the Missouri. The number of different tribes within a territorial division also

[60] Keenan, "Apache Wars," 5-6.
[61] Axelrod, 243-245.

prevented a single decisive battle. Commanders required a methodical approach that did not necessarily produce immediate results. Over the course of twenty-five years, the Army effectively ended Indian resistance in the West, making settlement safe for exploding population of the United States.

World War II

The Second World War raged for over two years before the United States became involved. Despite the seemingly neutral position of the United States, President Franklin Roosevelt met with Prime Minister Winston Churchill several times in 1941 to establish a strategy for defeating the Axis Powers. In August 1941, President Roosevelt co-supported the Atlantic Charter to ensure the support of the United States for Great Britain and the Soviet Union in their struggle against Hitler's Nazi Germany.[62] Four months later, on 7 December 1941, Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into an active role in World War II. The United States joined Great Britain and the Soviet Union in the coalition struggle against the tyranny of the Axis Powers. The Allies faced a war in two theaters with operations against the Germans and Italians in Europe and North Africa and against the Japanese in the Pacific. According to the strategy established in earlier meetings, the Allies would work to defeat Germany first, and then turn their attention to the Pacific and the Japanese.[63]

The European Theater

Having been involved in continental politics for centuries, the British preferred an indirect approach on the continent to take advantage of the power of its navy and

[62] Louis L. Snyder, *Historical Guide to World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 52.
[63] Maurice Matloff, "Allied Strategy in Europe, 1939-1945," *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 683.

economy while supporting their continental allies and avoiding the casualties of World War I. With these traditions and views in mind, the British formulated a strategy to hit Germany on the periphery, support insurgencies in occupied countries, and eventually strike at the heart of Germany once the Allies had sufficiently weakened it.[64]

New to European politics and coalition warfare, the United States did not share these views. Seeking to apply General U.S. Grant's principles of mass and concentration as derived from the American Civil War, the Americans wanted to strike Germany with an attack on the continent and defeat them using a strategy of annihilation.[65] The Americans' inexperience in coalition warfare resulted in the British using military diplomacy to take the lead. With the British in the lead, operations proceeded according to their indirect approach strategy. Operations in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy served to chip away at the German's military strength and gained combat experience for the American forces.[66]

Despite the success of the periphery operations, the Americans remained dedicated to a cross-channel operation to attack the Germans directly. The Soviet Union, fighting the preponderance of German forces since their invasion of Russia in 1941, also demanded a second front against the Germans on the continent. An unlikely alliance took shape at the Tehran Conference in late 1943. The Americans and Soviets, both desiring a cross-channel operation, overcame British resistance for continuing operations in the Mediterranean and gained approval for OPERATION OVERLORD, set for the

[64] Ibid., 679.

[65] Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1973), 313.

[66] Ibid., 323-6.

spring of 1944.[67] The Americans were finally going to apply General Grant's principles against the *Wehrmacht*.

On 6 June 1944, the Allied forces of the United States and Great Britain executed OPERATION OVERLORD, conducting airborne and amphibious assaults on five different beaches in Normandy, France. Following the breakout from the hedgerow country of Normandy, the American strategy of mass and concentration proved decisive as American forces crushed at least one German field army while sustaining minimal casualties.[68] Mass and concentration did not limit the Allied advances to single-thrust, narrow front, offensives. The size of the Allied armies, coupled with the breadth of their fronts, enabled the Allies to strike at various points of concentration, forcing the Germans to defend along a wide front, thus dissipating their forces and resources.[69]

While the Allies and Germans fought numerous battles during the Allied drive into Germany, there was not a single decisive battle that knocked the Germans out of the war. The drives by the U.S and Great Britain in the west and the Soviets in the east focused more on strategic operations rather than on single decisive battles. Battles still occurred, but were not the primary object. The goal of Allied operations was to seek an advantageous strategic situation that, if it did not produce a decision of itself, it would set the conditions to achieve a decision through future operations.[70]

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[67] Matloff, 689.
[68] Weigley, 347.
[69] Ibid., 352.
[70] Basil H. Liddell-Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (New York: Praeger Publishing, 1954), 364-5.

The Pacific Theater

Despite the "Germany first" strategy agreed upon in 1941 by the United States and Great Britain, the full attention of the United States did not shift to Europe until 1944 and the preparation of OPERATION OVERLORD.[71] Prior to 1944, the Americans had one-third of the Army Air Force, thirteen of twenty-six Army divisions, and the majority of Navy and Marine Corps forces operating in the Pacific theater against the Japanese, making it the larger of the two theaters.[72] Because the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war, the Americans did not want to sit idly by, allowing the Japanese to consolidate their gains and prepare a staunch defense while the British attacked the periphery of German power in Europe. Meanwhile, the Japanese Combined Fleet, under the command of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, sought to complete the destruction of the American Pacific Fleet in a Mahanian battle of fleet destruction. While the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway did some damage to the American navy, they proved disastrous to the Japanese. In addition to the loss of ships by both sides, these battles also introduced a new form of naval warfare, where one fleet did not see the other and the fleets engaged each other with aircraft.[73]

Unlike the European theater, where compromise was commonplace in working with the British, the Americans took the lead in formulating the strategy against the Japanese.[74] The Joint Chiefs of Staff devised a strategy of dual advances through the central Pacific and the southwest Pacific that would converge on the Japanese home islands. General Douglas MacArthur commanded the drive through the southwest

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[71] Matloff, 699.
[72] Weigley, 270-1.
[73] Ibid., 271-3.
[74] D. Clayton James, "American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War," *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 722-3.

Pacific, while Admiral Chester Nimitz commanded the drive through the central Pacific. The Joint Chiefs gave the central Pacific drive primary emphasis because it promised a faster approach to Japan and her lines of communication; provided quicker opportunities for obtaining strategic airbases to attack Japan; and was most likely to force a Mahanian battle with the Japanese fleet.[75]

Much like the European theater, battles in the Pacific were part of the larger strategy of attacking the Japanese home islands.[76] Rather than seek battle with Japanese Army forces, the Americans often bypassed large concentrations of Japanese soldiers, cutting off their supplies and leaving them to wither on the vine. In January 1945, the drives through the central and southwest Pacific converged on the island of Luzon. From there, the Americans drove north through Iwo Jima and the Ryukyus Islands in February and April 1945, respectively.[77]

In early August 1945, while preparing for the invasion of Japan, the Americans dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[78] The atomic bombs destroyed their targets and led to Japan's capitulation. Upon the conclusion of hostilities, General Tojo Hedeki reported that the American victory was due to the American submarine attacks on Japanese commerce, the Americans' ability to operate for long periods away from bases of support, and the island hopping campaign that neutralized major Japanese bases.[79] The strategy developed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff proved very effective in using battles as steppingstones to achieve the goals of the greater

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[75] Weigley, 285.
[76] Ibid., 286.
[77] Ibid., 305-6.
[78] Williamson Murray, "The World at War, 1941-1945," in *Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare*, ed. Geoffrey Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 339.
[79] Weigley, 311.

strategy. From the start, the Americans recognized that a single decisive battle would not be possible against the Japanese.

Regardless of which theater the Americans fought in during World War II, the quest for a decisive battle did not exist. The Joint Chiefs of Staff sought to apply Grant's principles of mass and concentration to defeat the enemy. The American experience in World War II reflected the conclusions of the Russian-Soviets following World War I and their Civil War. A single battle or campaign would not decide the outcome of a war. Rather, through the application of successive and simultaneous operations, the Allies achieved the defeat of the Axis Powers.

The Cold War

With the close of World War II, the United States emerged as a major world power. Promoting the concepts of democracy and capitalism, the United States, soon found itself facing an ideological adversary in the form of the Soviet Union. Immediately following the war, the Soviet Union began exporting its political system to those countries it occupied as it drove the *Wehrmacht* into the heart of Germany. The rampant expansion of communism into Eastern Europe gave the United States and the Western democracies reason for concern. Seeking to stem the onrushing tide of communism, the United States adopted a policy of containment.[80]

In addition to the spread of communism, the Soviet Union soon posed another threat. At the end of World War II, the United States was the world's only atomic power. However, this situation was short lived, as the Soviet Union developed its atomic weapons program in the late 1940s. The twin threats of Soviet expansion of communism

[80] Ibid., 366.

and possession of atomic weapons demanded a new strategy by the United States. The armed forces of the United States were no longer to fight wars, but rather to prevent them in support of national policies.[81] This strategy became coherent in the spring of 1950 when the National Security Council published *NSC-68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* (NSC-68).

Directed by President Truman, the Departments of State and Defense re-examined the objectives of the United States in both peace and war in light of the probable possession of thermonuclear weapons by the Soviet Union.[82] Comparing the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union to a struggle between freedom and slavery, NSC-68 identified three objectives for the United States. First, the United States needed to remain strong in terms of military and economic power, and in the values America held dear. Second, the United States must actively promote a successful political and economic system in the free world, namely democracy and capitalism. Finally, the United States needed to present its values in such a way as to inspire a change in the nature of Soviet communism.[83]

With these objectives in mind, NSC-68 recommended that the United States build up the political, military, and economic strength of the free world. This build up would demonstrate the determination of the western democracies to stop the spread of communism and convince the Soviet Union that it would not be able to dominate the world.[84] A strong military would be able to deter any aggressive acts by the Soviet

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., 379.

[83] National Security Council, *NSC-68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* (Washington, D.C., 1950), Section IV, B.

[84] Ibid., Conclusions and Recommendations.

Union, providing the time for the political and economic instruments of national power to undermine the Soviet system.

The strategy of deterrence now joined the policy of containment, established immediately after World War II, using the elements of political, economic, military, and nuclear power. While the strategy of deterrence prevented an outright war between the United States and the Soviet Union, it did not prevent smaller, regional wars in which the two superpowers fought by means of proxies. From 1950 until 1953, the Korean War ravaged the Korean peninsula as the communist north first attempted to take over the democratic south and then attempted to maintain its own territory with the assistance of the Soviet Union and Communist China. From 1956 to 1973, Soviet sponsored states in the Middle East fought several wars against Israel, which was supported by the West. From the late 1950s until 1973, the United States fought to defend the Republic of Vietnam against its communist neighbors from North Vietnam. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to bolster the communist regime there. Tribal warriors, mujahadeen, supported by covert aid and agents of the United States and other countries, eventually expelled the Soviet invaders after ten years of fighting.

In 1980, the United States refocused on the Soviet Union with the election of President Ronald Reagan. His policies probably accelerated the collapse of the Soviet system, and by the fall of 1989, the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe ended. The Berlin Wall, erected in 1960 to stop the flow of people escaping to West Berlin from the Soviet occupied East Berlin, came crumbling down. Within two years, the Soviet Union itself fell apart, thus ending the Cold War.

Throughout the Cold War, the concept of a single battle or campaign was not realistic for the United States. The collapse of the Soviet Union would not come by means of military power alone. Additionally, the size of the Soviet military and the expansive territories it occupied did not lend themselves to destruction in a single battle or campaign. Furthermore, both countries planned for the use of nuclear weapons in conducting conventional operations.[85] The use of nuclear weapons by one side would necessitate a similar response from the other, potentially escalating to the use of strategic nuclear weapons, thus leading to the annihilation of both countries and possibly the entire world. While the Superpowers could have waged a single decisive battle, it could have resulted in a nuclear holocaust.

Analysis of Decisive Battle

From the time that General Grant assumed command of the United States Army in 1864, the quest for a Napoleonic decisive battle has taken a back seat in the way the United States has planned and conducted war. The successive and simultaneous operations that ended the American Civil War served as the foundations of strategy that would be applied in the future wars of the United States. Chapter Two defined decisive battle as "a single battle or campaign by a force that compels the enemy to accept the political or social changes desired and terminate the conflict." The application of this definition to the three case studies reveals that, while battles occurred, they did not fit the definition of decisive battle.

The pacification of the western United States during the American Indian Wars relied upon multiple campaigns over a twenty-five year span against several different

[85] Michael Carver, "Conventional Warfare in the Nuclear Age," *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 812.

tribes of Indians who desired to maintain their traditional lifestyle rather than succumb to the will of the United States. During World War II, the United States again faced multiple enemies in separate theaters who espoused tyranny over subjugated peoples. By means of multiple, successive campaigns, the United States, along with its allies, drove both the Germans and Japanese to capitulation. During the Cold War, the United States found itself in an ideological struggle with the Soviet Union on a worldwide scale that involved several other nations. The United States did not fight the Cold War by military power alone, but also by the political and economic instruments of national power. During the Cold War, decisive battle was not a possibility because a nuclear exchange could annihilate both countries and potentially the world.

Armed with the definition of decisive battle and insights from these three case studies, the focus will now shift to the current War on Terror to answer the question, "Is the concept of decisive battle compatible with the Global War on Terror?"

THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR AND DECISIVE BATTLE

> Now, this war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion…Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen…Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists…any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.[86]

Nature of the Global War on Terror

During his address to the Joint Session of Congress and the American people on 20 September 2001, President Bush spelled out the framework for the "Global War on

[86] Bush.

Terror." He foreshadowed the prolonged and worldwide nature of this ideological conflict. While he did not identify other enemies in addition to *al Qaeda*, President Bush did indicate the wider spread of the Global War on Terror by stating, "Our war on terror begins with *al Qaeda*, but it does not end there."[87]

In considering the nature of the Global War on Terror, it is prudent to understand what terrorism is, who uses it, and why. Terrorism is a form of conflict that uses fear and the threat of violence to coerce, persuade, or capture the attention of the public by taking action against selected targets within the population.[88] Terrorism, generally regarded as the poor man's form of warfare, is the antithesis to decisive battle. As a protracted form warfare, terrorism provides very few, if any, decisive, much less total, victories.[89] This lack of decision in a protracted conflict is similar to the Cold War.

Following the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States remained the sole super power. This position, coupled with the United States superiority in conventional warfare, has led other nations and groups to seek unconventional ways to obtain their policy objectives. Rogue states, would-be regional powers, and non-state actors, motivated by revolutionary and religious fervor, have resorted to terrorism as an instrument to maximize their foreign policy objectives.[90] Recent examples include suicide bombers in Israel to support the Palestinian struggle for an independent state, *al Qaeda*'s attacks against the United States abroad and at home to change its policies in the

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Stephen Sloan, "Terrorism and Asymmetry," *Challenging the United States Symmetrically and Asymmetrically: Can America be Defeated?* Ed. Lloyd J. Matthews (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 1998), 174.

[89] Ibid., 189.

[90] Ibid., 178-9.

Middle East, and Iraqi insurgents seizing and killing foreigners to prompt countries to abandon the U.S. led coalition there.

With reference to the Global War on Terror, the United States' foremost enemy is *al Qaeda*. *Al Qaeda* is not a single organization, but, rather, is more akin to a worldwide conglomerate. It has employees, branches, and partner organizations in the form of other terrorist groups. In addition to its ability to raise money throughout the world, *al Qaeda* also provides specialized training to advance its goals.[91] Like any worldwide conglomerate, *al Qaeda* rests on a bedrock belief. This belief is a radical Islamic fundamentalist ideology.[92] This ideology has two facets. The first facet reflects its radically separatist nature. *Al Qaeda* seeks to protect the Islamic world from Western decadence, with the United States as the most dangerous threat.[93] The second facet of *al Qaeda*'s ideology is its commitment to violence to achieve its goals. *Al Qaeda* seeks to use mass violence in attacking its targets. Furthermore, it does not distinguish between legitimate military combatants or the civilian population when it performs its attacks.[94]

Four additional factors drive *al Qaeda*'s hatred for the United States. First is the United States' support for Israel. Since its founding in 1948, the United States has staunchly supported Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. The second factor is the American military presence in Saudi Arabia. Al Qaeda views the presence of infidels, especially the military of the United States, in the land of the Prophet

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[91] James Reilly, "A Strategic Level Center of Gravity Analysis on the Global War on Terrorism"(Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 11.

[92] Ibid., 9.

[93] Stephen Biddle, "War Aims and War Termination," *Defeating Terrorism: Strategic Issue Analysis*, ed. John R. Martin (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), 8.

[94] Ibid., 9.

Mohammed as a sacrilege. Third, al Qaeda views the sanctions imposed by the United Nations on Iraq following the first Gulf War as an affront to Muslims the world over. Finally, *al Qaeda* objects to the United States' historical support for leaders in the Muslim world, such as the Shah of Iran and the House of Saud, who do not meet the standard of *al Qaeda*'s ideology of radical fundamentalist Islam.[95]

In addition to serving as its bedrock belief, *al Qaeda*'s ideology also serves as its strategic center of gravity.[96] This radical, fundamentalist Islamic ideology enables *al Qaeda* to draw disenfranchised Muslims to its point of view. The United States must realize that it is very difficult to defeat an idea or ideology; therefore, the United States cannot destroy *al Qaeda*'s center of gravity, but only reduced its importance.[97] To do this, the United States must employ other means, such as the economic and informational elements of national power, and not just the military. Recognition of this fact requires the United States to formulate a long-term strategy that addresses all the elements of national power. According to Clausewitz, the first step in conducting a war is to determine the nature of the war, ensure that it supports national policy, and prevent it from becoming something that it is not.[98] This strategy guides the political and military leaders during a war to ensure that policy does not become subservient to war. Without such a strategy, the intermediate objectives and end state of the Global War on Terror remain unclear.[99]

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[95] Douglas J. Koski, Jr., "Counterterrorism Policy – Do We Have It Right?" (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 2-3.

[96] Reilly, 9.

[97] Ibid., 24.

[98] Clausewitz, 88.

[99] Jeffrey Record, *Bounding the Global War on Terrorism* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 1.

The United States faces a myriad of issues in conducting the Global War on Terror. *Al Qaeda*, while not the only terrorist group, is a worldwide organization with many sub-elements and partner organizations. The large number of sub-elements and their locations throughout the world do not lend themselves to the United States conducting a decisive military battle to destroy them. To overcome the radical, fundamentalist Islamic ideology of *al Qaeda*, the United States must expand its strategy beyond that of military power. It must use diplomacy to engage other nations to participate in this struggle. It must apply its economic power to bolster the struggling economies of the Islamic world to reduce the masses of disenfranchised youths that *al Qaeda* targets while encouraging

other nations to do the same. The United States must use its informational power to undermine the legitimacy of *al Qaeda*'s ideology, not only in the Western world, but in the Middle East as well. The end of the Global War on Terror will not occur with a formal treaty of surrender on a set day or time. Rather, the United States will only realize the end of the war after a prolonged period where no terrorist attacks have occurred against it or its interests.[100]

Comparison Between Global War on Terror and Case Studies

The historical case studies discussed earlier share many similarities with the Global War on Terror. These similarities include multiple adversaries, several theaters of engagement, and an ideological struggle over a long span of time. By comparing and contrasting these historical examples with the Global War on Terror, this study aims to determine what lessons from the past the United States can apply to the current conflict.

[100] Biddle, 12.

Additionally, the comparison of the historical precedents with the Global War on Terror can indicate what role, if any, decisive battle can play in the future operations of the United States Army.

The American Indian Wars share some similarities with the Global War on Terror. The vast number of Indian tribes is comparable to the variety of terrorist groups that make up *al Qaeda*, as well as those groups not affiliated with *al Qaeda*. Additionally, the diversity of the tribal cultures of Indians is similar to the cultural differences faced throughout the Muslim world. Just as a Sioux is not a Cheyenne, Cherokee, or Apache, neither is an Arab the same as a Persian, Malaysian, or Balkan Muslim. In World War II, the United States faced Germany and Italy in Europe and Japan in the Pacific. While the United States faced only three distinct adversaries in World War II, far less than the number of terrorist organizations today, it needed a different strategy for each one. During the Cold War, the United States primarily faced the Soviet Union. However, there were times when the United States squared off against other communist countries, such as North Korea and North Vietnam. While each of these countries was communist in nature, the United States could not use one strategy against them all. Each situation was different and required a different strategy. Similarly, today the United States must develop a different strategy for the various enemies it faces. Variation in approval might occur at the strategic level, directed by the President, or perhaps at the tactical level, where two or three different terrorist cells exist within a battalion's area of operations.

The vast areas the Army operated in during the American Indian Wars were much more limited that the worldwide scope of operations for the United States Army today.

However, in context of the times, the American West was vast, especially when one considers the modes of transportation. The division of the West into multiple departments and divisions aided the Army in both administration and operations. In World War II, the United States divided the world into two theaters, the European Theater of Operations and the Pacific Theater of Operations. Within each theater, commanders were responsible for specific regions and operations. During the Cold War, the United States divided the world into regional areas in order to meet the threat and expansion of communism. This practice remains today, with the United States dividing the world into five Regional Combatant Commands. Dependent upon the situation, the Combatant Commander can establish additional headquarters to assist in the command and control within a region. Currently, United States Central Command has, inter alia, Multi-National Force – Iraq and Coalition/Joint Task Force 180, which operates in Afghanistan.

Ideologically, the Indians fought for their way of life against a nation desiring to settle the land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The settlers of the United States migrated westward to make a better life for themselves. The Indians wanted to maintain their ability to hunt and move freely throughout the American West. The two ideologies increasingly came into conflict as the Indians' hunting grounds became cattle ranges and farm plots, and as whites hunted an important source of food for the Indians – the buffalo – solely for their skins. Over a span of twenty-five years following the American Civil War, the United States settled this ideological struggle by moving the Indians onto reservations and essentially destroying their way of life. During World War II, ideological struggle pitted the democratic ideals of the United States against the fascist or

fascist-like oppression of the Axis Powers. The decisive defeat of the Axis Powers resulted in the collapse of the political systems that drove them to their aggressive actions. This defeat left the former Axis countries of Germany, Italy, and Japan open to the political views of the occupying powers. Meanwhile, the differing political views of the Allies, namely the United States and the Soviet Union, sowed the seeds of the Cold War. The United States sought to contain the Soviet Union's aggressive spread of communism to expand the Soviet sphere of influence. This policy of containing communism drew the United States into conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, and Latin America. Meanwhile in Europe, the United States sought to deter further Soviet aggression through the build up of conventional and nuclear forces.

In these conflicts, the ideological element required the complete destruction of the enemy or the gradual undermining over a prolonged time of the ideas the enemy held dear. The ideological struggles of the American Indian Wars and World War II could fall into the category of complete destruction of the enemy. Alternatively, success in the Cold War resulted from the gradual erosion of the political legitimacy of communism over forty-five years. In the Global War on Terror, the United States must determine how to approach the ideological struggle. To destroy an idea requires the destruction of any person who ever considered that idea. This is not a very feasible course of action. However, by undermining the importance and legitimacy of the idea over a prolonged time, the United States can overcome the radical fundamentalist Islamic ideology without shedding volumes of blood.

In conducting the Global War on Terror, the United States must first realize the prolonged nature of this conflict. President Bush communicated this fact during his

speech on 20 September 2001. The Bush Administration must continue to reiterate the prolonged nature of this conflict to the American people. By taking a long-term approach, the United States can establish a strategy that applies all of the elements of national power to their full capabilities. While military power can solve problems quickly, the result generally persists for a limited time. Alternatively, the other elements of national power take time to become influential, but can result in a lasting peace. Using the Cold War as an example, the Departments of State and Defense created NSC-68 in three months time, but the strategy it set forth proved effective for over forty years. By taking a prolonged approach to the Global War on Terror, the United States can fully develop a diplomatic, economic, and informational plan to undermine the legitimacy of the radical fundamentalist Islamic ideology it faces. Much like the three historical case studies, the Global War on Terror will not find termination in a short decisive battle or campaign. The United States must wage the Global War on Terror over many years. The conclusion of the Global War on Terror will not come with a formal declaration of surrender. The United States will realize its victory when its enemies realize they cannot achieve their objectives and stop using terror as a means to advance their goals.

The Application of Decisive Battle

Decisive battle, that single battle or campaign that compels the enemy to accept the political or social changes desired by means of force and terminate the conflict, did not play a major role in the examples discussed earlier. Given the similarities between them and the Global War on Terror, one can surmise that decisive battle has little or no application to this current conflict. The wide variety of enemies the United States must contend with, the worldwide aspect of the conflict, and the ideological nature of the

struggle does not readily lend itself to the concept of a single battle or campaign. This is not to say that the Global War on Terror will not have battles; it will. In fact, these battles will even render decisions. However, the decisions rendered will not conclude the war by their own merits, but will set the conditions for future operations. By using battle to set the conditions for future success, this concept returns to the Marine Corps' view that a battle must lead to a result beyond itself and directly to ultimate success in the war.

For battles to lead directly to the final victory requires a complete and comprehensive strategy. As stated earlier, the United States must develop this strategy and articulate it to the American people. The United States cannot rely on the swift military successes of Afghanistan and Iraq to bring a lasting peace. With military forces still deployed to these countries, one can argue that these quick successes actually prolonged the conflict. After losing conventional fights against the United States military, the enemy forces in both countries resorted to fighting with unconventional tactics while the United States struggled to secure and stabilize the countries and put operational governments into place. Victories in Afghanistan and Iraq are only small parts of a larger conflict and will not conclude the Global War on Terror. However, success in these two countries will set the conditions for the future success in the Global War on Terror.

With battles still playing a large role in this current conflict, what other factors limit the relevance of decisive battle to the Global War on Terror? One should reconsider those factors that emerged in the late Nineteenth Century that contributed to the initial demise of the concept of decisive battle. Those factors persist today. The large size of armies, increased areas of operation to a global scale, and improvements in technology

have greatly diminished the opportunity for a single battle or campaign to decide a war and bring a lasting peace. Additionally, when belligerents bring ideologies into the mix, a single battle will not likely destroy or undermine the ideology. Nations will win wars by the use of successive operations, involving many battles, aimed to secure a lasting peace. These operations are likely to have varying content and employ various means to attain various ends.

CONCLUSION

> "Accordingly, having made an objective and comprehensive appraisal of all the circumstances concerning both the enemy and ourselves, we point out that the only way to final victory is the strategy of protracted war, and we reject the groundless theory of quick victory." – Mao Tse-tung[101]

While Mao's strategy reflected the viewpoint of the underdog, the United States should heed his words and take the same approach. Its enemies in the Global War on Terror are taking this approach, especially in the light of the stunning military successes in OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. These successes must not lull the United States into a false sense of security. If the United States is to win the Global War on Terror, it must develop a long-term strategy that encompasses all the elements of national power, not just the military. A decisive battle will not end the Global War on Terror.

The idea of a decisive battle is one that has captivated practitioners and theorists of the military art, not to mention the population at large. This study considered the role

[101] Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972), 207.

of decisive battle on the development of military theory. However, by the end of the Nineteenth Century, with larger armies, expanded battlefields, and improved technology, a single decisive battle became a relic of the past – something to yearn for, but never witnessed again. To settle a war or conflict with one military battle is desirable, but it is not grounded in reality. The historical examples in this study demonstrated that decisive battle did not determine victory. Rather, a long-term strategy, which combined the military with the diplomatic, informational, and economic power of the United States, proved decisive. In today's world, the temptation of decisive battle is like the Siren's call from the rocky shore.

The military successes in the initial stages of OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM may tempt the United States into thinking that decisive battle can win the Global War on Terror. This assumption is far from the truth, as current events in Afghanistan and Iraq indicate. Battles will still be waged and these battles will render decisions. However, the decisions these battles achieve should set the conditions for gaining the ultimate victory in the Global War on Terror. The United States will not win the Global War on Terror with military power alone. It must develop a comprehensive, long-term strategy for the Global War on Terror that brings the full force of American diplomatic, informational, military, and economic might to bear on the enemy. In the Global War on Terror, decisive battle is an unrealistic dream. A long-term, comprehensive strategy is this war's reality.

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